



Secrets of the Garden: Food Chains and the Food Web in Our Backyard

Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld , Priscilla Lamont (Illustrations)

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Perfect for spring planting season--an outstanding book about backyard science the whole family will appreciate.

Alice's family plants a vegetable garden each spring, and this budding naturalist reports all she sees about how the plants grow, what insects come to eat the plants, and what birds and animals come to eat the insects. It's the food chain, right in her own backyard!

While Alice's narrative is simple and engaging, science concepts are presented in more depth in sidebars by a pair of very knowledgeable (and highly amusing) chickens! Noted science writer Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld knows how to layer information to make it accessible to a wide range of readers and useful for educators. And illustrator Priscilla Lamont's funny, friendly paintings make this a garden everyone will want to explore.

Kids will eat up this wonderful book of backyard science—and perhaps they'll even be inspired to eat their vegetables!

"A wonderfully informative and enjoyable journey through one family's backyard garden, from spring planting to fall harvest. . . . this is bound to spark some backyard explorations." —*Kirkus*, Starred Review

From the Hardcover edition.

Secrets of the Garden: Food Chains and the Food Web in Our Backyard Details

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ISBN : 9780517709917

Author : Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld , Priscilla Lamont (Illustrations)

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From Reader Review Secrets of the Garden: Food Chains and the Food Web in Our Backyard for online ebook

Jessica says

Tipped off a month of "what does a [animal] eat, Mommy?" conversations! He also demands pictures.

Laura says

Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld address all the wonders of backyard gardening. She tells about a family planting seeds in the spring and explores various garden food chains. The text is simply but addresses fairly sophisticated ideas. I loved the page about worms! The words are laid out in the tunnels that worms dig through the earth. The pictures are an excellent complement to the text and really help clarify ideas.

Recommended as a great science text for grades 2 - 4. This is a great addition to a school library and it will work best for school populations that have a school garden or where many families have a garden.

Molly says

In this picture book, a young girl explains how food chains work through the example of her family's backyard garden. The book is interesting and engaging and explains things in an easy-to-understand manner.

Anna says

1. SUMMARY – Alice narrates her experience working with her family in their backyard garden. The story endures from the beginning of spring to the beginning of winter. Each family member has a job to do that helps the garden grow. As the story progresses, we get an inside look at how all the creatures in the garden rely on each other for nutrients of some kind.
 2. GENRE – This picture book is a blend of realism, illustrations, and informational text with anthropomorphic elements interspersed. A family's backyard and gardening activities provide the basis for the story. Animals such as chickens help move the story along by providing important information about how the garden works. This information is based on the food web that exists in the garden.
 3. LITERARY CONCEPTS – precise language, prepositional phrases, compound predicate
 4. TRAITS – Word Choice: specific content words. Sentence Fluency: clauses, phrases. Presentation: dialogue boxes, various formats, word and drawing integration
 5. OTHER CONTENT – Life Science
 6. Interest level – K – 4th
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Jenna Langemeier says

Opening Moves:

1. "The title of this book is *Food Chains and the Food Web in Our Backyard: Secrets of the Garden*. (Show students the inside cover of the book.) What do we know about gardens? (children respond) That's right! We grow gardens to make food. I love gardening with my mom in the summer. We grow tomatoes, bell peppers, cucumbers, and zucchini. As we read this book, I want you to think about how the plants in the garden get their food, and also think about who then eats the plants as food.
 2. The first opening move I was activation of student background knowledge by asking what they know about gardens. The students could have shared information about gardens they've seen, helped plant, what grows in a garden, what plants need to grow, or other responses. Next, I shared a personal connection about gardening with my mom and the kinds of plants we grow in our garden at home. Finally, I left students with questions to try and answer as we read the text. This helps to lay the groundwork for helping the students understand the important information in the text.
 3. I chose this book for my food chain text set because it shared the information in a narrative-like manner in a little girl's perspective, to which students may be able to relate. Often, scientific information is acquired through informational text. I added this book to the text set to mix up the genres and make sure that fictional text was represented, as well. This story brings together information about food chains, starting with how plants get their food and energy. It moves on to describe animals that eat the plants, including humans, bringing in vocabulary words, like carnivore, herbivore, omnivore, producer, and consumer. These ideas connect with the other books in this text set, specifically the books *Carnivore* and *Herbivore*, which are nonfiction texts.
-

Kate Hastings says

Grades K-5. This book can be read on different levels or used to explain different concepts for different grade levels. A backyard garden is the context for explaining how plants grow and what they need to live. Challenges are explained-- why my plant doesn't grow overnight, why critters eat the plants, poor soil, water content. Parts of plants we eat are discussed, too.

The last half of the book looks at food chains and food webs-- how different plants and animals depend on each other to survive.

Extra goodies: cover pages have maps of the garden.

Willow says

There are definitely better books about growing vegetables out there. This was the only choice I had at my local library. Next year, we will get something a bit less boring. The writing is simply not engaging and the lack of any character development is not helpful.

Pamela Hatch says

Secrets of the Garden : Food Chains and the Food Web in Our Backyard / written by Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld; illustrated by Priscilla Lamont -- New York : Alfred A. Knopf, c2012. (36 pages).

SUMMARY: The story of one family's garden is used to explain both what plants need to grow and how a garden gathers together many creatures into one amazing food web. (bookjacket)

REVIEW: I picked up this book because it had the word "garden" in the title. I brought it home because I liked the illustrations. But I didn't care for the story -- it kept jumping between fiction and facts being told by chickens. The best thing was the facts themselves. I just wish the author had told the facts (without talking chickens) and worked around the family's garden to clarify the information.

Tasha says

Alice loves it when spring arrives and they can start planting the garden. Her dad gets the soil ready for planting and then she and her brother start putting the seeds in. It seems like a long time before the seeds finally sprout. Then other seedlings are transplanted from pots and potatoes are sown. Lettuce and radishes are ready to eat first, and Alice spots a rabbit munching on them too. She also thinks a mouse might be eating the fallen corn. Hawks hunt in the garden and there are plenty of insects too. Autumn nears and harvest begins, and the food cycle of the garden is complete for another year. Throughout the book, the chickens offer commentary about the cycle itself with information about herbivores and carnivores, compost, worms and much more.

Read the rest of my review on my blog, [Waking Brain Cells](#).

XIS Grade 3 says

Debbie: Two children were in a secret garden. They found lots of food and fruit in a garden.

David Q: I like this book because in the book the garden have a lot of part. The food in the garden is my favourite. And there were one things that I dislike is why they have a lot of part why no one part everybody can have plant the food together.

Sharon Lawler says

Very simple exploration of a family's backyard garden. From the need for sun and water, to the value of composting, children will learn about the plant development from spring through fall. They will also learn about the interdependence between plants and the insects, birds, and animals. The book concludes with the family harvesting and storing the vegetables, and using the winter months to plan the next one. Even though there is a lot of information, you can use this book with many levels, from PreK onward. There are charts,

graphs, dialog bubbles, and straight text. Illustrations were executed in watercolor and pen. No resources, but the author grew up on a farm and is very familiar with growing plants.

Jonathon says

I chose this book in honor of spring.

This book is very educational. It goes through and talks about different plants and it has illustrations of each plant and what its sprout looks like. After going through some of the plants, it begins to talk about the food chain. It has an illustration of a plant, a mouse eating the plant, and then a hawk swooping down and eating the mouse. It gives ideas for caterpillars that eat the vegetation. The little girl in the story caught as many as she could and fed them to her chickens. Later on in the illustrations there is a picture of worms underground. There is a tunnel that has part of the page written within the tunnel. As the tunnel winds and turns, so do the words. You have to flip the book back and forth in order to read it. I thought that was a cool idea.

The book is very educational and could be used in many settings within a classroom.

Elizabeth Miller says

This nonfiction text uses accurate vocabulary and facts about planting and food chains. Written with characters, but with text features and many nonfiction elements. Could be used to introduce the plant unit and referred back to after the art project to supplement about the edible parts of plants.

Kendra Wheeler says

Secrets of the Garden: Food Chains and the Food Web in Our Backyard by Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld, is a narrative book told by the character Alice. Alice talks about the processes of having a garden and the animals that live around there. This book is very educational talks about plants and the food chain that can happen in a garden.

This book uses fun illustrations that are more cartoonish then real life. The content in this book is very detailed but it is still easy enough for kids to be able to read and understand the material.

This book would be a great to inspire a lesson about the food chain present on our school grounds. The class would make simple food chains based on what we found on our school grounds' habitats. This would give my students to have a lesson outside and give them the opportunity to have them connect the lesson with a real environment that they see and play on every day.

Christy says

Alfred A. Knopf (NY)
2012

Kathleen Zoehfeld
Priscilla Lamont
30 pages
Picture Book

I was surprised at the academic depth of this picture book. The reader could choose to read the story alone, but the reader could also get an education by reading the bubbles spoken by the family or the animals that benefited from the garden. I was surprised that a picture book would explain topics such as compost, nutrients, sprouting plants, photosynthesis, energy, food chain, herbivores, carnivores, omnivores, cultivators, and ecology. As I was pleasantly surprised at the depth of the book, I considered how secondary students may react to such a reading in a Biology course. Definitely worth a try.
